



Leading and managing a shipping company has become ever more challenging with a continuously increasing list of items on the busy agenda. Shipping is now not just about moving cargo but includes Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) aspects, sustainability, decarbonisation, new technologies, and responding to world events.

# GET THE SAFETY RIGHT... GET EVERYTHING RIGHT

There is, however, one area that has slipped down the agenda in recent years, which also receives little attention in the world shipping media, and that is safety. Yet safety remains the single greatest risk to shipping and the solution to managing the many challenges.

Shipping is one of the world's most hazardous industries. The Allianz report shows an increasing number of shipping incidents, and according to Lloyd's List Intelligence data, in Q3 2022, shipping recorded the highest number of casualties in a quarter in 14 years. There is also a rising number of seafarers reported as killed or missing.

At the same time, other industries have recorded substantial safety improvements, an example being the 85% reduction in accidents and fatalities on commercial airlines in the last 10 years reported by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. Although very different from shipping, the progress made by the airline industry demonstrates what can be achieved when safety is placed at the top of the agenda.



by **Dr Grahaeme Henderson**  
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Another critical aspect of safety that is little understood is that companies with a strong safety performance also have a strong business performance. Simply put, if you get the safety right...you get everything right. The reason is that safety is central to everything we do, both at work and in our daily lives, because it is about people, our families and children, but also our seafarers who also have families and children. Our employees are the lifeblood of our companies, and we must put their safety at the very heart of shipping.

Getting our safety programmes right is imperative today and vital to the future success of any shipping company. Safety ensures the shipping industry's future sustainability and attracts high-quality talent. In addition, shipping's decarbonisation will not be possible without a strong safety focus. Finally, safety allows us to develop a mindset of learning from each other and enables teams to collaborate, generate fresh ideas, and deliver solutions to a host of challenges.

If there is an incident, it will cost a company dearly in terms of both direct and indirect costs. Insurance may cover some of the costs, but the company will incur the

cost of delays while investigations take place, loss of revenue, compensation costs, management time, and more.

There are also indirect costs, such as the negative impact of publicity on the company, how the employees feel and react, and the damage to the owners and the leadership team's reputation.

From another perspective, having a strong safety focus allows the management and the entire organisation to focus on the positive aspects of incident prevention, with the added advantage of a strong commercial performance. It is also recognised that the traits of a great safety leader are the same as those of a great business leader. That is because both roles require the ability to envision, develop, and deploy an effective strategy and take accountability for its results; leaders with empathy who can empower and inspire employees; leaders that ask questions, listen, and value the contribution of others.

A good safety performance energises and motivates staff to perform better and increases trust from the very top of the company to the seafarer on the ship. In addition, it builds a strong reputation for the company and its employees while encouraging a positive approach to everyday work.

So, how do we make the necessary changes to make safety the top item on the agenda for all involved? Shipping has many important and influential industry groups, ship owners and managers, and related supporting businesses. But what has become apparent from speaking to those groups about safety is that something else needs to be done. Something that will bring all the various groups together and unite the shipping industry around safety which will not result in more regulation but will draw on the collective expertise of the industry.

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From these beginnings, the Together in Safety coalition was formed four years ago, bringing together all shipping industry groups, including the International Chamber of Shipping, BIMCO, OCIMF, Intertanko, Intercargo, Interferry, Cruise Liners International, and the World Shipping Council. In addition, it includes many major shipping companies, insurance companies, classification societies, and country representatives.

The Together in Safety Coalition's core objective is to protect seafarers' lives while delivering improved business efficiency and commercial effectiveness, and is fundamental to safeguarding shipping's future success.

A detailed strategic analysis of shipping incidents carried out by Together in Safety has shown three fundamental root causes for such incidents. The first of these is leadership. Visible safety leadership must stem from the top down, with the right behaviours and mindset modelled by the company's CEO and leadership team. Starting every con-

versation with safety, visiting people on the front line, reviewing progress, and taking corrective action where required is crucial. Together in Safety provides safety training modules and guidelines to help leaders develop a vision and plan, improve engagement, and facilitate collaboration.

The second root cause is poor incident prevention. A detailed analysis of major shipping incidents during the past years across all shipping sectors performed by Together in Safety has concluded that they are always the same types of incidents, i.e., collisions, groundings, ships on fire, lost containers, and people falling overboard. It is important to note that these are not accidents but repeated events that could and should have been avoided. They result in unnecessary loss of seafarers' lives, pollution, and excessive expenditure.

Together in Safety focuses on 14 categories of major incident types involving casualties or high-cost insurance claims. A set of 'Golden Safety Rules' have been outlined for each incident type, including guidelines and best practices, training, engagement tools, and checklists for the work areas known to experience significant safety issues.

The third root cause is a company's ineffective well-being and care policy. The Together in Safety initiative includes recommendations on delivering a high-quality well-being and care programme and improving seafarers' mental health. This is key to developing a healthy, happy and high-performing team. There are also guidelines to help promote and integrate mental health and wellness strategies, tools, and techniques into your organisation's safety policy, including ways to promote seafarer safety and respond to physical and mental well-being issues.

A key aspect of Together in Safety is that it helps companies move quickly towards delivering improved and sustainable safety and business performance. Its material and best practices are designed to complement and augment existing safety programmes and are freely available on the Together in Safety website.

The Together in Safety coalition is working with shipping groups to help them introduce the concepts mentioned above in order to improve their safety performance.

If you get the safety right... you get everything right.

Visit [www.togetherinsafety.info](http://www.togetherinsafety.info) for further details.